

# OXFORD

## MAGAZINE

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No. 449   Second Week   Hilary Term   2023

The circumstances of Irene Tracey's appointment as our new Vice-Chancellor are so remarkable that it is no wonder they were an underlying theme of her Oration at the Admission Ceremony on 10th January, where she was introduced with a forthright speech from the Chancellor. Apart from two years in the USA Professor Tracey's whole life has been spent in the Oxford area, both as resident brought up in a typical, and modest, household – representative of many members of Oxford's 150,000 non-University population – and then as a high-achieving Oxford academic.

A second notable, but unsurprising, recurring theme was the centrality of science in the University's activities, in a University still often regarded as most characterised by humanities subjects such as PPE. But did she get down to specifics and what do these tell us about future planning?

Her speech included more than one reference to "the city"; "The University has been integral to this unique city for over 800 years." "[A]s a literal Town and Gownie, I know how interdependent we are." "University staff engage daily with city and county decisions; our students volunteer for local organisations and schools; and there are countless examples, from Low Carbon initiatives to the Playhouse, of the University, city and county working together."

"However, I am also acutely conscious of the tensions", she added, between the University – which continues to expand as if resources were unlimited – and the city. She alluded to several specific areas of overlapping interests; the fact that the collegiate University has successfully reduced pressure on the rental market by providing college accommodation for students (more than any other large

### "LOCAL GIRL"

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university city) and by undertaking provision of subsidised staff housing in Begbroke (as a response to the crippling house prices in the city). "But the city and community must also recognise the challenges we face as a world-leading university embedded not in a London, Boston or San Francisco, but in a relatively small and beautiful city on the edge of the Cotswolds. Oxford's size cannot be a limiting factor in creating opportunities. Let us help each other and be ambitious and imaginative

for what we can co-create here, alongside our local partner in Oxford Brookes University."

"As Vice-Chancellor, I am absolutely committed to strengthening and deepening the relationships between the city, county and University. Let us think global and act local. Oxford firing and wiring together. I aim to create a new position so that we can take forward our collective ambitions around local and global engagement."

This was one action plan that the Vice-Chancellor specified. And there was a second: "I have heard the strength of feeling on pay and working conditions, and it is a priority for me to make sure the University is doing everything it can to support staff during these difficult financial times and to be an attractive place to work in the future. As such, I shall immediately commission an independent analysis of all aspects of pay and conditions for all our staff – academic and non-academic – that will report directly to me and Council and on which we can act."

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*Oxford Magazine* has a long memory. Past issues constitute a diary of University affairs – a running commentary on and record of key events. This year our current

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*...and much more*

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Strategic Plan (2018-2023) was due to end although due to Covid it has been extended by one year. We must earnestly hope that it is the last. As was pointed out at the time (*Oxford Magazine*, No. 400, 2nd Week, MT 2018) the exercise was presented to us (erroneously) as a necessary regulatory requirement by the Office for Students. At that time (*Oxford Magazine*, No. 399, 0th Week, MT 2018) we were critical of its expansionist implications and especially its planned c10% increase in student numbers, with its obvious knock-on implications for this crowded city.

But the inappropriateness of any such (self-described) “ambitious”, one-off exercise is now perhaps becoming clearer. At a particular moment in 2017/18 it made recommendations (in an evidence-free, sparse 11-page final document) covering in vague aspirational terms a remarkably comprehensive range of policy areas including infrastructure, resources, finance, building, size and shape, public and global engagement, equality and diversity, employment conditions and staff well-being. University relations with colleges and college matters were understandably outside the remit of the Plan, but freedom of speech, internal communication and disciplinary issues were also not mentioned. As the most recent (equally evidence-free) Annual Report 2020/2021 reveals, of the 29 specific projects undertaken (“priorities”) 2 are “not on track for implementation”; for 19 “significant risks have been identified that could delay or derail the implementation”; 7 are “on track”; one is “inactive”.

Given the vast complexity of our University and the ever-increasing problems of establishing priorities, let alone actually achieving change, Professor Tracey’s approach of commissioning a few specific, and particularly urgent projects is probably the only way forward nowadays, it being noted that she has announced these projects without consultation, prior notice or, as yet, democratic approval.

\* \* \*

In his introduction at the Admission Ceremony the Chancellor highlighted the relevance and importance of freedom of speech for the University. “We must ....stand up for liberal values within the academy. If we allow ourselves to be colonised by a modish political correctness, this will be used against us by people who wish us ill. Universities should be bastions of freedom in any society: free from government interference in their teaching and research, while promoting the clash of ideas. Freedom of Speech is fundamental to the identity of universities, enabling them to sustain a sense of common humanity and to uphold the tolerance and understanding that underpins any free society.”

It was a notable feature of the Strategic Plan that no mention was made of governance or Congregation and

its relation to Council, i.e. to the democratic foundations of the University which we supposedly hold so dear, although it does assert that: “The University’s distinctive democratic structure ... will continue to offer a source of strength”

*Oxford Magazine* had at the time repeatedly expressed its concerns about the increasingly moribund condition of Congregation. In 2018/2019 Council’s own three-yearly self-review agreed and made recommendations accordingly: “A review of the membership and conduct of the business of congregation should take place.” However Council later abandoned this approach and agreed instead that “a proposal would better come from Congregation” (*Oxford Magazine*, No. 418, 8th Week, HT 2020). (Whether the self-review due in 2021/2022 has occurred has not been made clear.) In her final Oration, last October, the departing Vice-Chancellor reinforced the viewpoint, in stark terms: “Participatory democracy requires participation. If people are unwilling to participate then we ought to ask ourselves, why? As Oxford moves forward to become an ever-more modern institution, it would be good to think that its mode of governance might adapt.”

As the Chancellor said: “In an open society like our own, liberal democracy is safeguarded not simply by fair and regular elections but by the existence in our community of institutions and rules, checks and balances.” Democracy is under threat internationally and nationally but not because the ideal is in dispute; it is the mechanics of democracy that is failing. Why is democracy failing in our own university?

The first answer is – witness the Admission Ceremony speeches – that this acknowledged problem is systematically avoided as an issue urgently in need of attention. Moreover, in true Catch-22 fashion, Professor Richardson put responsibility squarely on Congregation itself. Over time involvement in and indeed basic awareness of the role of Congregation have withered precisely because (as internal communications and antiquated Congregation procedures have become increasingly limited and limiting) Congregation has become less and less informed about Council policies and is therefore deprived of ability to engage. In this circular argument about responsibility for generating change it has to be insisted that it is only Council that has it in its power to free up the deadlock.

Echoing Professor Tracey’s scientific analogy, for any new policies to work staff must be “firing and wiring together”. Failure to review and reform Congregation processes is a failure of leadership which corrodes shared staff belief in the University’s common purpose and collegiality. Do we really want our unique democratic foundations to remain a mockery?

B.B.T.J.H



# Reminders



Our new Vice-Chancellor has identified the working conditions of Oxford staff as one of her priorities. Many factors feed into staff well-being but final income must be the most fundamental. Many of the determinants of income and expenditure are well-known but the net overall impact on individuals cannot be so easily measured. For example, the costs in money, safety and in time of commuting (itself conditional on housing costs) are affected by the availability and costs of public transport, petrol prices and the city's clean-air policies, not to speak of erratic and potholed cycle lanes. Childcare costs may take up a large proportion of salary, too. Here all we can do is provide some of the relevant and accessible data.

## Pay

Since 2009/10, the national HE pay scales have declined in value by 25% relative to RPI, due to a series of below inflation pay increases.

Equality pay gaps in the HE sector:

Gender = 16% Race = 17% Disability = 9%

(Source: Oxford UCU <https://oxforducu.org.uk/blog-2/>)

The Vice-Chancellor's basic salary and total remuneration [2021-22] expressed as a multiple of median basic salary (and total remuneration including both taxable and non-taxable benefits) is as follows:

**Academic staff:** 6.3 times median basic salary (6.6 times median total remuneration – for all other than the Vice-Chancellor this excludes college allowances or benefits such as housing and private medical insurance).

**Academic University and subsidiary staff:** 10.3 times median basic salary (10.9 times total remuneration).

**All staff:** 10.7 times basic salary (11.2 times total remuneration). "All staff" comprises "Academic University and subsidiary staff" listed above plus staff employed in educational publishing activities in the UK plus staff employed on temporary contracts through the University's Temporary Staffing Services (TSS) or on contracts with no fixed hours.

	2021/22 £'000	2020/21 £'000
The emoluments of the Vice-Chancellor who served during the year were:		
Basic salary	411	374
Benefits – taxable		
Membership of private healthcare scheme	5	5
Accommodation	46	9
Payments in lieu of pension contributions	49	45
Pension contributions	23	8
Non-taxable benefits	8	18
<b>Total remuneration</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>459</b>

In 2021/22, 279 members of University Staff were paid more than £100,000.

(Source: Oxford University Financial Statements 2021/22 <https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/Oxford%20University%20Financial%20Statements%202021-22.pdf>)

## Workload

61.2% of surveyed staff responded that their workload pressure and intensity has increased significantly over the last three years.

32.7% of surveyed staff responded that their workload was unmanageable most of the time or entirely unmanageable.

The average weekly FTE hours worked was 55.6.

(Source: UCU Workload Survey, results for University of Oxford, <https://www.ucu.org.uk/workload-survey-results>)

## Casualisation

[Nationally] around one-third of all academic staff are employed on insecure fixed-term contracts; this figure rises to almost half for teaching-only academics (44%) and over two-thirds (68%) for research-only staff.

Research showed that 42% of staff on casual contracts struggled to pay household bills, 71% said their mental health had been damaged by working on insecure contracts, 43% said it had impacted their physical well-being.

(Source: Oxford UCU blog <https://oxforducu.org.uk/blog-2/>)

Research-only academics on fixed-term contracts: Oxford University 87%; 74% of women on fixed-term contracts; 61% of men on fixed-term contracts; 61% of white staff on fixed-term contracts; 83% of BAME staff on fixed-term contracts.

(Source: "Precarious Academic Work in Oxford," a report by UCU, February 2022 [https://oxforducu.files.wordpress.com/2022/02/oxford\\_anti-cas\\_report\\_22.pdf](https://oxforducu.files.wordpress.com/2022/02/oxford_anti-cas_report_22.pdf))

## Pensions

The long-running dispute regarding the proposed cuts to the USS pension scheme concerns the valuation conducted by the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) in March 2020, as markets were crashing during the COVID-19 pandemic and claimed that contribution rates needed to increase very significantly from the rate of 30.7% of salary (9.6% for members, 21.1% for employers) that was established under the 2018 valuation. The employer representative, Universities UK (UUK), pushed through major cuts to the guaranteed, defined benefit element of the scheme which came into force in April 2022.

However, in June 2022 the scheme reported a surplus of £1.8 bn i.e., a £15.9bn increase on the £14.1 bn deficit that had been reported in March 2020.

(Source: Oxford UCU blog <https://oxforducu.org.uk/blog-2/>)

The global loss across current USS scheme members, in today's money, is calculated to be 16-18 billion GBP, with most of the 71,000 staff under the age of 40 losing between 100k-200k GBP each, for CPI averaging 2.5%-3.0%. A repeated claim made during the formal consultation by the body representing university management (Universities UK) that those earning under 40k GBP would receive a “headline” cut of 12% to their future pension is shown to be a serious underestimate for realistic CPI projections.

(Source: Jackie Grant, Mark Hindmarsh, Sergey E. Koposov, “The distribution of loss to future USS pensions due to the UUK cuts of April 2022” <https://arxiv.org/abs/2206.06201>)

### Housing in Oxford and Oxfordshire

In the year ending December 2019, the average (median) house price paid in Oxford was £395,000 across all house types.

(Source: Oxford City Council [https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20126/housing/458/housing\\_in\\_oxford](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20126/housing/458/housing_in_oxford))

At the lower end of the market house prices are more than twelve times residence-based earnings, indicating the difficulty in entering homeownership.

(Source: ONS, “Housing affordability” 2019 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhouseprice-toresidencebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian>).

Oxford remains the least affordable UK city for housing with average house prices over 17 times the average salary.

(Source: Centre for Cities 2019 <https://www.centreforcities.org/city/oxford/>).

Rented housing in Oxford is also relatively expensive – monthly rents in the city are some of the highest in the South East.

(Source Oxford City Council, quoting the Valuation Office Agency [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/809646/South\\_East.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/809646/South_East.pdf)).

### Property Price in Oxford by number of bedrooms

	No. of properties	Average price	Median price	Average ToM
One bedroom	105	£256,365	£245,000	218 days
Two bedrooms	245	£340,457	£335,000	165 days
Three bedrooms	219	£502,894	£475,000	132 days
Four bedrooms	141	£799,288	£700,000	172 days
Five bedrooms	55	£958,181	£800,000	164 days

(Source: Home.co.uk [https://www.home.co.uk/guides/house\\_prices.htm?location=oxford](https://www.home.co.uk/guides/house_prices.htm?location=oxford)) [NB: ToM = Time on market]

### Property Rents in Oxford by Number of Bedrooms

	No. of properties	Average price	Median price
One bedroom	87	£1,627 pcm	£1,200 pcm
Two bedrooms	105	£1,868 pcm	£1,450 pcm
Three bedrooms	87	£2,366 pcm	£1,800 pcm
Four bedrooms	96	£3,246 pcm	£2,400 pcm
Five bedrooms	48	£3,672 pcm	£2,913 pcm

(Source: [https://www.home.co.uk/for\\_rent/oxford/current\\_rents?location=oxford](https://www.home.co.uk/for_rent/oxford/current_rents?location=oxford))

### Childcare costs

Parents now pay an average of over £7,000 per year, for just a part-time nursery place, so it takes up a large chunk of the family budget.

In the UK, the average cost of sending a child under two to nursery is:

£138 per week – part time (25 hours)

£263 per week – full time (50 hours).

The average cost for families using an after-school club for five days is £62 per week.

(Source: NCT <https://www.nct.org.uk/life-parent/work-and-child-care/childcare/average-childcare-costs#how-much-does-childcare-cost>)

See also *Oxford Mail* “Cost of pre-school childcare in Oxfordshire revealed for the first time” <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/17220794.cost-pre-school-childcare-oxfordshire-revealed-first-time/>

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NB The *Oxford Magazine* is not an official publication of the University. It is a forum for the free expression of opinion within the University.

The next issue of *Oxford Magazine* will appear in fifth week

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# Notes from Ivory Flats

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ROBERT FOLEY

*Gosh, is that the time?*

If I want to shock my younger colleagues, I tell them about my early years as a lecturer. My first teaching appointment was in 1977, at the University of Durham. It was something nowadays unheard of – a nearly finished PhD, a single scrappy publication, and all of 24 years old. Times were so different then, and I have more than a pang of guilt when I see the current generation wobbling from post-doc to post-doc, clutching armfuls of publications in top journals, glittering with awards and veteran teachers, struggling to find a permanent post.

That's shocking enough, and indeed I can't help but wonder whether I would have survived beyond my PhD in these more competitive times. But to send them into an apoplexy of incredulity I talk about cricket. In these more diverse times this often means a) explaining what cricket is; and b) persuading them it is not the world's most boring game. Once that is done with, I tell them how, in my early years as a lecturer I would play cricket for the University Staff team two or three times a week through the summer – from around 4pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, usually being beaten by the students, and all day on Saturdays for a local club, travelling round the increasingly silent mining villages of Durham.

How on earth, they would ask, did you have the time for this? And indeed, it is a perplexing question even for me. My last ten or fifteen years of teaching and researching at Cambridge before I retired in 2020 were, by comparison, manic. Days filled with meetings, inboxes filled with gentle reminders, lunchtimes filled with seminars, even the occasional lecture and supervision. Weeks would pass in a blur, terms become blank memories of sameness. Where on earth did the time go?

An optimist might say that I was teaching more, giving more time to the students and less to failing to perfect my cover drive. This is almost certainly not true, for my lecturing load was higher in Durham than it ever was in Cambridge, and indeed in Cambridge – which I moved to in 1986 – I gave more lectures in the last part of the twentieth century than I did in this one. Supervising has also declined. For many years I would teach first year students across many colleges, and all the second and third years students who took my courses, something that would be unheard of now among my colleagues. In line with the rest of the University, the onus of teaching has moved to the great untenured. So, it's not the teaching.

Perhaps it is my red-hot devotion to research. Certainly, if I look back to those early days, my approach to research was, how shall I put it? – ...more relaxed. Writing books was still an acceptable form of research, so I was doing that. This involved a lot of reading and thinking (cricket was good for the latter), and was relatively cheap. I needed grants for fieldwork, but these were modest and intended to get me places rather than decorate my CV and boost

the University's income. At the time there also seemed to be a much closer relationship between teaching and research – lectures were almost an integral part of the research process, and it is my impression that a more binary world has developed recently. I think, on the whole, that while a considerable amount of time may be devoted to research, these days that time is often more peripheral to the research than actually doing it – writing grants, writing reports, advising and reviewing, supervising others – researchers as research facilitators. That there is not as much quality time for research may be indicated by the fact that three early career researchers have resigned from permanent posts in my Department in the last year or so, all citing not enough time for research.

Which leaves what can only be described as other things – the committees, the emails, the online forms, the reports, the courses. In principle, of course, they may all be described as furthering teaching and research, but in practice they are the shadows of the the real thing. What they do is fill the day (and, on many days, the evening as well). Let's look at getting an hour's lecture out. When I started that was a case of preparing it (reading, thinking, writing notes), which could be a few hours and is probably much the same as now. One would have given the students a handout at the beginning of term with some reading, and each lecture might have a handout with either complex figures or bullet points, typed and photocopied. Then one would write some outline and key points, draw some simple graphs, on overhead projector acetates. This may be buttressed by a few slides, usually prepared by the departmental or university photographic team. Then, off to lecture... and an hour later it was all over. Now, the lecture needs a powerpoint presentation (and that alone is a black hole for time spent looking for the perfect graphic and working out the best colour scheme), uploaded (at least) a day before the lecture, an abstract of the lecture uploaded to something, a reading list with the pdfs of the articles uploaded, possibly a recording uploaded beforehand these days, and if not, a recording done at the time, uploaded afterwards, answering emails from confused students...and on it goes. At the more masochistic end of academia, the lecture may be recorded and put online, and then an entirely separate hour devoted to discussing it (assuming the students have watched it) (thus doubling the lecturers' time). Where before one was an academic with a coloured pen set, now one is lecturer, film director, TV presenter, IT expert, secretary, and occasional agony aunt. More significantly, the work for each lecture has probably quadrupled.

There is no doubt – at least I think there is no doubt – that the quality of teaching provided to students has increased. My poorly xeroxed black and white graphs do not really compete with fully referenced and slick powerpoints and the opportunity to stop and start a recording as many times as you want. Universities are probably

right to trumpet this change in what they no doubt call the learning experience, but they are wrong not to recognise the cost. The cost is the time it takes out of the daily life of the academics. If teaching is supposed to take up about half our time, and the load has doubled or more, then that time has to come from somewhere – cricket time, research time, family time, all have to reduce commensurately. Academic life may be a game, but it is important to remember it is a zero-sum game – or at least should be.

Most businesses would probably go bankrupt if progress was measured in terms of producing the same product – a lecture – with massively more time and effort, but that is essentially what has happened in universities without anyone really noticing. Why? Because the costs were silently absorbed in academic staff time. And this process applies not just to teaching, but to all the other activities we do. Grant applications – used to be, write a grant, show it to some knowledgeable colleagues, send it off and hope for the best. Now, at Cambridge at least, there are a series of internal deadlines and checks, so that a grant application may be processed and changed, possibly even rejected, many times before it even gets to a research council. A grant deadline in June may then have an internal deadline of March, stretching the process, and indeed the gap between internal and real deadline is likely to grow due to ‘pressure of work’ in the administration. Kerchung, another addition in the cash till of time for the hard-working academic ....

Postgraduate applications – once a rapid circulation of the papers, a few pithy comments, and then accept or reject. Now there are forms with endless criteria, bonus marks, and a space for comments on each justifying the points. Then an interview, involving at least two people, then meetings to agree rankings, then summaries of each case for higher entities... Kerchung, another few (or many) hours gone..... Post-doctoral appointments would be a simple matter of an informal committee, a robust discussion of CVs, an interview and an offer and some apologetic letters to unsuccessful candidates. Now, it is HR directed, formal committees, the same questions to all, and complete adherence to a set of criteria that are likely to fade in the light of the real world of applicants, HR forms with scored and ranked candidates (carefully constructed to match the preferred outcome) and then, of course, the listing of all the reasons why the others were not appointed. Kerchung, another few hours gone.... Examining – always a painful experience for me at least, because one was aware of the serious responsibilities we were undertaking, but at least short and sharp. Increasingly, it is a continuous process of coursework assessment and feedback forms (please, not less than a page), and ap-

peals. Kerchung, another few hours gone.... Expenses – once a simple matter of a per diem, now we have to take a photograph of each receipt, upload it, enter the figures on spreadsheet and who knows what else. Kerchung, another few hours gone.... Risk assessments, no I had better not go there. Kerchung, another few days gone.

My point here is not the curmudgeonly one that this is managerialism gone mad, tempting as that is, but the practical outcomes of these changes for the people carrying them out. Simple tasks now just take longer and longer. Admittedly, there may have been a bit of slack in my cricket playing days, but there is none now, and each addition of tasks, each layer of process, each complex form adds minutes, hours and days to each bit of work. The effect of these is amplified by email, where (as discussed in an earlier Ivory Flats) the ease of making requests can fill still further the day with amorphous blobs of activity.

These encrustations are not the core activities – the giving of a lecture, the writing of a paper, the selection of a candidate, the running of a lab or field project – but the peripheral and often surplus supports that have grown like barnacles around them. Each may be beneficial and worthy – to students, to the auditing and accountability of the university, to compliance – but they come at a massive cost to the lumpen academic. There are only so many hours in the day, and they were filled some time ago. Everything now either spills into the time we should be teaching or researching, or into our evenings and weekends. And with each soulless, teaching-free, research-free hour that is added, three things happen. One is that the work of the average academic just grows and grows, invading terminally the life-work balance that is championed by all universities. Another is that morale slumps. A colleague of mine told me that he used an app to track exactly how he spent his time, but after a couple of months he abandoned it as it was too depressing. And the third is that people leave....

In her Admission Ceremony the new Vice-Chancellor of Oxford gave a very moving speech which included the following:

*“we must find ways to shift the needle in your [academic staff] quality of life so that you can continue to deliver your best performance”.*

A very promising signal, but it is not just a matter of shifting the needle to go faster or slower, but resetting it so that it measures what is important, not just in Oxford, but in Cambridge and all other universities. Too late for my cover drive, but very welcome.

The *Oxford Magazine* is edited by

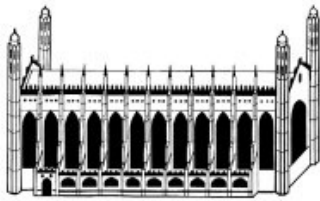
**Tim Horder & Ben Bollig**

The *Magazine* normally appears in Noughth, Second, Fifth and Eighth Weeks each Term.  
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should be received by the Wednesday of the previous week.

*Literary Editor:*

**Jane Griffiths at Wadham**





# Notes from Cambridge

## Cambridge reconsiders its EJRA

Concerns about the continuing acceptability of Cambridge's Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA) policy were expressed in the Discussion of the *Annual Report of the Board of Scrutiny* on 8 November, 2022. It was pointed out that 'forced retirement' at 67 is a disincentive to potential applicants for University Offices and leads to untimely termination of research projects and the loss of posts for young researchers dependent on grant-funded salaries on such projects. A Topic of Concern Discussion was called, for 24 January.<sup>1</sup>

Cambridge began its EJRA with a surprising level of support from the Regent House. The initiating *Report* concluded with the Recommendation:

*'that approval be given for maintaining the retirement age of all University officers (with exceptions as specified) at the end of the academical year in which they attain the age of 67 years.'*

A broadly-framed Grace that the recommendations 'on a retirement policy for University staff be approved' was published in the *Reporter* of 22 February, 2012. A Notice on the Grace announced a Ballot, 'In view of the importance of the proposed policy'. This was approved by 1390:300 (*Reporter* 2 May 2012). What has changed?

Cambridge's 'Retirement Policy' differs from that of Oxford in two main respects. Oxford's EJRA has been vigorously challenged, in a series of internal Appeals and Employment Tribunal claims and through debates in Congregation, one of them called as a 'Topic for Discussion'.<sup>2</sup> Cambridge has not until now faced an energetic call to end the requirement that certain of its employees must retire at 67. There was a 'Review' in 2015-6, but that was dealt with by the Council and General Board, not the Regent House, and resulted in continuation with little change and no challenge.<sup>3</sup> The present challenge will carry an element of surprise.

Secondly, Oxford does not have a system of University Officers like that in Cambridge. There they enjoy extensive special protections under Statute C. In Cambridge its form of the Model Statute created by the Commissioners under Education Reform Act 1988 ss.202-3 and applying to University Officers remains largely unamended, placed in a Schedule to Statute C, 'pending their eventual replacement after further review'.<sup>4</sup> Oxford made considerable changes to its counterpart in the revisions to Statute XII approved by the Privy Council in February 2017.

Cambridge applied – and applies – its EJRA only to established University Officers whose departure leaves a continuing post to be filled. The selection of the constitutionally privileged holders of University Offices for enforced retirement made some sense in 2011-2, and even in

2015-6, but in recent years there has been a multiplication of 'unestablished' academic and academic-related posts, whose holders do not have to retire at 67. Such posts can be multiplied as freely as funding can be identified for them by the Department or Faculty or School which wishes to create them. The vacating of such posts does not create a vacancy to be filled. This greatly weakens the original argument that forced retirement is the only way to create openings for younger academics.

A significant change, driven largely by the continuing need to solve the problem of the perceived unfairness of the promotions procedure, has been the invention of an Academic Career Pathway,<sup>5</sup> two in fact, one for 'Teaching and Research' academics and a new one, for 'Teaching and Scholarship'. The first was the subject of a *Report of the General Board on arrangements for senior academic promotions* published on 10 May 2018. The second 'pathway' was the innovation of 'teaching-focused' University Offices, introduced in a *Report* of 24 March 2021.<sup>6</sup> The idea was to improve recognition for academic staff 'whose primary responsibilities are the delivery of teaching' by providing 'an appropriate employment contract for new posts' which are 'in the strategic and operational interests of the Department or Faculty' and create 'a dedicated career path' for these appointees, or any 'teaching and research' academics who transferred to it.

The introduction of these 'Pathways' has not been smooth. There followed a change in the rules preventing transfers from Teaching and Scholarship to Teaching and Research, which had been allowed in the original design. That prompted indignation which promised to lead to a ballot, and the Grace was withdrawn by the Vice-Chancellor on 14 July. The General Board reconsidered and published a Notice in the *Reporter* of 23 November 2022 detailing changes and submitting a new Grace.

The Academic Career Pathways are still in extreme youth and by no means quite settled yet, but structurally they have made somewhat clearer the patterns of expectation which stretches before those appointed to Offices and those only to unestablished posts. Transfer from an unestablished post in Teaching and Scholarship to Professorial level at Grade 11 or 12 is not possible because a Professorship has to be established by Grace as an Office. That may be achieved by publishing a *Report* proposing the establishment of a 'personal' Professorship for a named individual. The latter is the normal route for promotion to a Professorship for an University Officer. That solution has been accepted in an early test case.<sup>7</sup>

However, it raises questions about financing. The annual promotions round has been funded for a number of successes agreed for that year, an additional cost because only the underlying University office carries the established funding (at Lectureship level). The General Board has noted that 'there is an expectation that the introduction of the transfer process will result in a small number of

additional bids for resources, to which the University will give due consideration’.

This has all taken place without review of implications for the EJRA, for these unestablished staff promoted to University offices in this way in a new Career Pathway will now become subject to enforced retirement at 67, but their retirement will not free a post for a new employee or an existing employee seeking promotion because the new establishment is merely ‘personal’. This should draw attention to a flaw in the original claim that vacating an Office would create an opportunity for upward movement of more junior Office-holders. With the exception of the limited number of permanently established Professorships the ‘establishment’ of an Office is at Lecturer level. An Office-holder who had become a Reader or Professor by promotion (the more common way) would hold an Office at that level specially established by Grace for that single named individual. Retirement would end that senior post and the vacated underlying Office would be a mere Lectureship. This flaw in the argument that that would create opportunities for junior staff has not been touched on.

### *Do the Cambridge ‘Aims’ still stand up?*

Like Oxford, Cambridge took the decision to enforce a maximum retirement age for University Officers in response to the legislative changes which came into force from 6 April 2011. Those removed the application of an age-based compulsory retirement unless the employer could justify it ‘objectively’ as a ‘proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim’. The *Joint Report of the Council and the General Board on a retirement policy for University staff* (Reporter, 14 December 2011) gave reasons for reliance on a set of ‘Aims’, whose legitimacy and force now seem questionable.

First came ‘Ensure inter-generational fairness and career progression’ and ‘Enable effective succession-planning’. ‘Inter-generational’ fairness seemed a proper concern in 2011 because it was ‘reasonably to be inferred’ that Officers ‘would elect to continue in employment beyond the age of 67 if they were able’ and would thus block opportunity for younger staff. With the multiplication of unestablished posts that now seems hard to justify.

Next came the aim to ‘Promote innovation in research and knowledge creation’. The *Report* of December 2011 stated that ‘the responses from the consultation exercise generally supported the proposition that within an academic community a balanced mix of collaborators across a range of generations is vital to invigorating the academic dialogue’. No evidence was given for this proposition to support it as an ‘Aim’, nor has it ever been tested. How could it be? How would the ‘range of generations’ required be fixed and the right ‘balance’ assessed so as to measure any resulting ‘invigoration’?

Last came an Aim to ‘Preserve academic autonomy and freedom’. In 2011-2 it was argued that Officers of the University had ‘the benefit of unique and specific protections which preserve academic autonomy and freedom throughout the course of their careers’. This statement relied on the provisions of Education Reform Act 1988 s.202(2) (a). That is now superseded by Higher Education and Research Act 2017 s.2(8)(c) which provides the same protection to ‘the freedom within the law’ of *all* ‘academic

staff at English higher education providers’. It therefore cannot now be argued that it is necessary to treat Officers differently from other academic staff in order to ‘preserve academic autonomy and freedom’ by enforcing their retirement at the age of 67.

Indeed it is hard to see what force that argument ever had, except that a further significant element in the discussion which led to the Gracing of the EJRA in 2011-2 and its continuation after the *Review* of 2015-6 was a frequent expression of concern that the only alternative to a general compulsory retirement age for University Offices would be ‘performance management’. The *Report* of December 2011 had said that ‘a fixed retirement age complements such protections by providing a means of ending an academic’s formal employment at a specific point without the need for career-long performance management processes’. The Working Group conducting the *Review* of 2015-6 had received comments which ‘indicated a receptiveness to exploring the introduction of some sort of a performance management framework, enabling a fixed retirement age to be removed’. In light of those comments, it had been suggested that the operations of the working group should be suspended in order to enable separate investigation of a performance management process’.

At a meeting of the Council on 18 April 2016 (Minute 92) a concern was raised about ‘the impact of a performance management scheme on academic freedom and tenure’. It was suggested that consideration could be given to such a framework ‘as part of one of the existing strands in the People Strategy’. A ‘People Strategy’ was announced in the *Reporter* of 4 October 2017.<sup>8</sup> This was to include a range of supportive elements, with ‘performance management’ becoming ‘Talent Management’, seeking ‘to contribute to the personal and professional development of staff to enable them to fully contribute to the University and reach their full potential’. The Academic Career Pathways were to form part of this. There would be a ‘case management system’ to ‘support the way in which conduct and capability issues are managed, recorded and reported across the University’,<sup>9</sup> implying that ‘performance management’ would be relevant only where an unusual ‘case’ presented itself.

### *Conclusion*

The Cambridge ‘Retirement Policy’ (EJRA) is at present on the HR website in two versions.<sup>10</sup> The one dated 2019 but ‘updated August 2021’<sup>11</sup> sets out the original four ‘Aims’, though ten years on these clearly need to be re-examined. This would of course require a *Report* to the University which could take the opportunity to include some consideration of the need for review of the multiplication of unestablished academic posts. The timing of any Grace removing forced retirement for University Officers only is likely to be affected by the fact that Cambridge’s new Vice-Chancellor will not enter into office for two more terms, and courtesy may require delay so that she may take a view. But that can be no reason not to carry out the necessary preliminary spadework.

G. R. EVANS



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2022-23/weekly/6679/6679.pdf#page=7>

<sup>2</sup> *Gazette*, Supplement (1), 24 May, (2017)

<sup>3</sup> The findings of a Review Group were discussed by the HR Committee in March (Minute 1699/16) and again in April (Minute 1713/16). The Committee found the reasons for the Group's findings inadequate:

*'While the Committee supported the proposed recommendations in principle, it advised that further explanation was required with regard to how the Review Group had reached those recommendations'.*

However this does not seem to have been followed up and that explanation sought.

<sup>4</sup> *Reporter*, 4 November, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.acp.br.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/acp\\_guidance\\_v1.2\\_14\\_september\\_2022.pdf](https://www.acp.br.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/acp_guidance_v1.2_14_september_2022.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> *Reporter*, 24 March 2021.

<sup>7</sup> *Reporter*, 15 June, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.br.admin.cam.ac.uk/people-strategy>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.br.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/cu\\_0021\\_br\\_review\\_2019.pdf](https://www.br.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/cu_0021_br_review_2019.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.br.admin.cam.ac.uk/policies-procedures/1-retirement-policy/9-annual-timetable-submission-applications-extend-employment>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.br.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/retirement\\_policy\\_2019\\_final\\_updated\\_2021.pdf](https://www.br.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/retirement_policy_2019_final_updated_2021.pdf)

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## Siren Song

### A Landay String

The best part of a year, I have worn  
this green ribbon. I've taken such care, no part of it's torn –

but now it is autumn, and I must  
wear red. My peers whisper about something called lust

as we enter the forest, quite sure  
of the clearing we've never seen but know will be there.

And when we find it, we'll take our green  
ribbons and bury them together. I picture them

slowly turning to seaweed as we  
clumsily take up the siren song, whose words we can't

remember. And so it relaxes  
into a hum, I think of bees, their bands of orange...

And I think that somehow I must find  
a word of my own for these colours, as though combined.

---

## The Sound of Dogs

There must be fugitives who know full well  
that their escape attempts will prove short-lived.  
They only want – before they're caught – an hour

of wind in what was once a head of hair...  
the sound of birds carousing in the elms...

And then the sound of dogs. So they must picture  
those hounds domesticated, and safe behind  
the fences of some childhood neighbourhood.

HUMPHREY ASTLEY

Humphrey 'Huck' Astley is a poet and musician based in Oxfordshire who graduated as Master of Studies with Distinction from Kellogg College in 2016. His works include the three-part album and stage-show *Alexander the Great: a Folk Operetta* (PinDrop/PRSF, 2013-15), *The Gallows-Humored Melody* (Albion Beatnik Press, 2016), and *A Christening Sprung from Her Science* (Rain over Bouville, 2021). He is founding editor of *The Crank*, and an occasional critic.

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## Muse

If I knew your name I'd whisper it  
to the trees. If I could see your face  
I'd touch it with my hands.  
If I could hear your voice I'd catch it  
with my tongue. If I could smell your body  
I'd keep it close to mine. If I had by heart  
the words of your most lovely melody,  
I'd make sure that they were sung.  
If I knew your mind...if I only knew  
your mind, I'd hold it like a captive bird,  
or like a bell that goes on quivering  
long after it has rung. And if I could foresee  
the way you'd come to me, I'd score it  
in salt forever on the silken sands.

---

## The Muse speaks

This thing you write, you think it's really new?  
You think that no-one ever thought this thing but you?  
You think that somehow you can stake a claim  
to words, and link them with your name?  
You think that words can be possessed, like land,  
that they don't slip away, like air or sand?  
What's wrong with common ownership, I wonder?  
There is no word you didn't steal or plunder.  
Wise up, get real, spurn individuation.  
Cast off this anxious quest for innovation.  
Lay yourself open to the words of others,  
accept them as you would the gifts of lovers.  
Recycle them, if they are strong and true.  
Be humble. You are only passing through.

LUCY NEWLYN

Lucy Newlyn, Emeritus Fellow in English at St Edmund Hall, has published widely on English Romanticism. These two poems are from her sixth poetry collection, *Quicksilver* (Lapwing, 2022) which was written partly in Oxford and partly in Cornwall, where she now lives.

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## A Little Light for Lucy

my verse is rarely free; strangled,  
squeezed out. Comes at great expense,  
to myself and others. I rhyme  
to find relief, to frame a kind of sense,  
to freeze time. Neither new fangled  
nor antique, it's a wonder that I speak  
at all.  
my muse takes me by surprise,  
endangers my days unless  
I take notice.  
like all of us, on lease,  
on call.

---

## Poet

At sixteen I got the call; something about  
the stars, how the dead ones still shine;  
something about the river, home to condoms,  
dead sheep; something about the grass.

I had read my snippets of Dante,  
Eliot, Whitman. I read Whitman  
to Anji, a trainee hairdresser.  
We sat by the mighty river and wept.

I had not read Dante. I had read  
Song of Myself in toto. Does not  
each teenager recite Song of Myself  
each day of their divided lives?

Anji loved it, but longed for action.  
That I could not provide, blushed like a beacon.  
She wore Biba mini skirts, cash flowed  
easy, at least for a Latymer boy,

a Haberdashers girl. Those were the days:  
we did not know it. We recruited  
Eliot to our campaign of free love.  
Eliot! Free love! Campaign! Blithe ignorance

only to be repeated in my dotage;  
I have it all, now. My hairdresser,  
my small boat, my easy rhetoric,  
my share of love, my religious faith

as tricky as an anaconda,  
my early waking with a pen in my hand,  
my assumed simplicity. Still waters  
stagnate unless they spin in a circle of love.

PETER PEGNALL

Peter Peggall has published seven collections of poetry and been writer in residence in many places, as well as a visiting poet at Lancaster, Sussex, Leeds and Coleraine Universities. He is the director and founder of many initiatives, including The Brighton Festival, South Hill Park Arts Centre, The Belfry Arts Centre in North Norfolk and A Casa dos Poetas, an international festival in Silves.

# REVIEWS

## Recollections may vary

Prince Harry, *Spare* (Penguin Random House, 2023).



A lot of attention has been paid to *Spare*, and it has proved a picturesque quarry for anecdotes and information about the Duke of Sussex's life. A good deal is cheap gossip, but it will prove to be a useful historical document when future histories are written about the British Monarchy.

I should like to take a different tack, and look at it in the context of other memoirs and autobiographies. Rumour tells me it has been beautifully written – but that, presumably, is mainly the achievement of the ghost writer, J. R. Moehringer. A book written by the Duke himself would probably be a different kettle of fish. Its first draft, apparently, ran to about 800 pages, so presumably some of the trimming comes down to the ghost writer. I wonder what sort of product the AI Chat GPT could manage?

It is, on the whole, a good read, and the sections on the war in Afghanistan are a revealing record from a combatant's point of view. A remark about modern warfare being something like an extension of a playstation is spot on: 'The thumbstick I fired was remarkably similar to the thumbstick for the PlayStation game I'd just been playing.' However *Spare* has been much criticised for revealing too much information not only about the Duke himself but his family. He has complained about invasion of privacy, but he has invaded his own privacy and that of his family not only in this book but the numerous interviews he has given.

Much of the energy in the book comes from hostility to the press, especially the tabloid press, and if any of us had been so relentlessly pursued by paps for most of our lives we would be irritated, not to say outraged. The death of his mother in the context of pursuit has influenced the rest of his life. In our world fact-checking is available at the click of a mouse, which has changed the literary landscape. In a tequila-charged interview with Stephen Colbert on the American *The Late Show* the Duke admitted he watched Netflix's *The Crown*, and fact-checked it. Mimed rapid movement of the thumbs. *Spare* has suffered from fact-checking by reviewers.

There are two kinds of autobiographies: those written while life is still underway, and those written on the death-bed, or close to the death-bed. This is the first of those. There is a long tradition of autobiographies,

going back to St. Augustine. His youthful indiscretion famously appears in 'The Fire Sermon' in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*: 'To Carthage then I came/ Burning burning burning burning.' Incidentally Eliot went to Buckingham Palace to read *The Waste Land* to the princesses. Afterwards, so P. D. James told me, they said that he had read a poem called 'The Desert'. I hope this story is true. Autobiography is a fascinating genre, and its products often give more pleasure than novels. There is something engaging about an actual reminiscence rather than a fictional concoction. Those written in mid-life are often in the Apologia tradition, for instance John Henry Newman's self-justificatory *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. Some autobiographies aim to set an individual life in cultural contexts, such as Edmund Gosse's superb *Father and Son*. *The Education of Henry Adams* is the record of experiences which don't always fit him for modern life. Ruskin's brilliant *Prateritia* is a classic. But these might not be the best models, since the Adams does not mention his wife's suicide and the Ruskin completely excludes his disastrous marriage.

What is true of modern biographies is that they are influenced by the narrative procedures of the novel. *David Copperfield*, say, tells one how to go about writing an autobiography. *Tristram Shandy* suggests the impossibility of autobiography, since so much demands to be included, that pages pass without the hero even getting born.

*Spare* has been heavily and adversely criticised by the press, driven by the feeling that he should not have been so indiscreet. I'm not as harsh, because it is often a good read. There is a certain amount that is amusing in *Spare* such as the moment when Meghan Markle, as she then was, thought the Duke of York was an 'assistant'. And there is a certain amount that is vivid, such as the Duke of Sussex's evocative descriptions of rooms and landscapes. Some details stick out, such as the beheading of a goat in Afghanistan: 'Even after the goat's head hit the ground, I remember, its yellow eyes kept blinking.' And there is a telling glimpse of the Queen wearing yellow earplugs at the Jubilee.

The Duke has been regarded as a thicko, but you can't be entirely a thicko if you can pilot an Apache helicopter. There is some good phrasing:

'Part of my brain knew, but part of it was wholly insulated, and the division between those two parts kept the parliament of my consciousness divided, polarized, gridlocked.'

And later:

'I snapped at her [Meghan], spoke to her harshly – cruelly. As the words left my mouth, I could feel

everything in the room come to a stop. The gravy stopped bubbling, the molecules of air stopped orbiting.'

A friend in Africa taught him to 'appreciate the baroque architecture of termite mounds.' The trouble is that one suspects that some of this might be the work of the ghost writer, and that does compromise authenticity a shade. When one watches interviews with the Duke one is less impressed by his range of communicativeness. He's often quite demotic in *Spare*, as in 'Nah. Calm before the shitstorm.' If I had written that I'd require real or imaginary prophylactic inverted commas, but it is the Duke's natural style, along with the todgers, mates and dudes.

The Duke often presents himself as sort of surface philistine, and he is not bookish, but from time to time there are literary allusions, and one wonders whether they come from him or his ghost writer. He writes, 'Why would I want to hear about a grief-stricken kingdom "contracted in one brow of woe"?' Later he asks 'Why were we here, lurking along the edge of that "undiscover'd country, from whose bourn no traveller returns"?' These are both quotations from *Hamlet*. He refers to 'Kafkaesque nightmare' and 'unappreciated Cassandra'. He quotes Tennyson: 'Ours not to reason why.' Near the end he writes, 'Looking back, I didn't see spots of time, but dances with death.' This is an allusion (intentional though?) to a famous passage in Book XII of *The Prelude*: 'There are in our existence spots of time, / That with distinct pre-eminence retain/ A renovating virtue.'

At one point he quotes (but does not name) Hilary Mantel writing in *The London Review of Books*: 'Our current royal family doesn't have the difficulties in breeding that pandas do, but pandas and royal persons alike are expensive to conserve and ill-adapted to any modern environment. But aren't they interesting? Aren't they nice to look at?' One sees the Duke more as a subscriber to *Loaded*, so presumably someone fed him this. *Loaded* has been described as the magazine 'for the man who believes he can do anything, if only he wasn't hungover.' I suppose Gray's 'Ode on a distant prospect of Eton College' is required reading at Eton, so he is able to refer to the place as 'Henry's holy shade'. The lines 'Alas regardless of their doom, / The little victims play!' run through my head. He relates his non-bookishness and his surface philistinism to his fear of memory:

'At all costs, I avoided sitting quietly with a book. It struck me at some point that the whole basis of education was memory. A list of names, a column of numbers, a mathematical formula, a beautiful poem – to learn it you had to upload

it to the part of the brain that stored stuff, but that was the same part of my brain I was resisting. My memory had been spotty since Mummy disappeared, by design, and I didn't want to fix it, because memory equalled grief. Not remembering was balm.'

Good autobiographies have to connect things across the years, and produce shape-*liness*, and *Spare* does this. This could derive from the ghost writer. He recalls that Princess Margaret (the great-aunt who 'could kill a house plant with one scowl') once gave him a biro as a Christmas present, and that appears as a *leit-motif*, for instance when he has to do the unthinkable thing: write a letter from Darkest Africa:

'Does anyone have a pen?  
A what?  
A pen.  
I've got an EpiPen!  
No! A pen. A biro! My kingdom for a biro!  
Oh. A biro. Wow.  
Somehow I found one.'

He writes a good deal about therapy, and coping with life. Could literature have helped? There is a moving moment in Primo Levi's *If this is a man*, 'The Canto of Ulysses' chapter, describing Auschwitz, when he says, 'I would give today's soup' to continue the lines in XXVI of Dante's *Inferno*: 'e parvemi alta tanto, /quanto veduta non n'aveva alcuna' ('and to me it seemed the highest I had ever seen'). 'I try to reconstruct it through the rhymes, I close my eyes, I bite my fingers – but it is no use, the rest is silence.' An unsympathetic reading of this episode would condemn it for aestheticization – turning experience, even as it happens, into something like a piece of art. It's not like that at all: it is an attempt to make sense of a hellish situation by linking it to one of the great works of European literature.

One feels that a more literary frame of mind would enable the Duke to place his experiences parallel to those of others. He has a mystic moment at Eton seeing a fox, recalled years later in Afghanistan. Had his Eton teachers fed him Ted Hughes's 'The Thought Fox' he would have been able to make a telling connection:

'Across clearings, an eye,  
A widening deepening greenness,  
Brilliantly, concentratedly,  
Coming about its own business

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox  
It enters the dark hole of the head.  
The window is starless still; the clock ticks,  
The page is printed.'

This is the connected moment in Afghanistan:

'Now the voices were saying more explicitly that Red Fox's cover had been blown, that he was exposed to the enemy, that he needed to be extracted immediately.  
Fuck, I said. Fuck fuck fuck.'  
My mind flashed back to Eton. The fox I'd glimpsed, when stoned, from the window of the loo. So, he really had been a messenger from the future after all. *One day you'll be alone, late at night, in the darkness, hunted like me...see how you like it.*

He makes an interesting reflection on succession in life, which he says took place during his wedding:

'It occurred to me then [did it?] that identity is a hierarchy. We are primarily one thing, and then we're primarily another, and then another, and so on, until death – in succession. Each new identity assumes the throne of Self, but takes us further from our original self, perhaps our core self – the child. Yes, evolution, maturation, the path towards wisdom, it's all natural and healthy, but there's a purity to childhood, which is diluted with each iteration.'

This is reminiscent of medieval ways of looking at things – enshrined in Shakespeare's 'seven ages of men' speech. An earlier Hal, cavorting with Falstaff *et al*, previsions the point at which he will move into the next stage of his life:

'So when this loose behaviour I throw off  
And pay the debt I never promised,  
By how much better than my word I am,  
By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;  
And, like bright metal on a sullen ground,  
My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,  
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes  
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.'

Falstaff feels the brunt of this when he is rejected at the Coronation by King Henry:

'Presume not that I am the thing I was;  
For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,  
That I have turn'd away my former self.'

The Duke, though, is unlikely to be king; as Shakespeare's Duke of Gloucester puts it, 'many lives stand between me and home.' Certainly this view of developmental progress makes it easier to reject one's youth than if one subscribes to a view of life's seamless continuity.

A recurrent problem in autobiographies is what to do with direct speech. Too many of them reproduce conversations, but as one reads one does not believe in them, because memory of direct speech is of necessity fragmentary and brief. When one sees extended and elaborate direct speech

in autobiographies one recognises that it is invented, which reminds one that so-called 'memory' is often as much invention as recollection, and that many autobiographies are dangerously close to novelistic fictions. The best one can recall are very brief phrases, such as that time in Betje-man's 'False Security' when he remembers the hostess's mother saying, '*I wonder where Julia found that strange, rather common little boy?*' There's far too much unbelievable direct speech in *Spare* in little italic sections which are supposed to bring the present immediately to life. I suppose though he did say to the Duke of Cambridge just before his wedding, '*You just know many of them need a pee.*' Which reminds me of what the Christ Church organist Sydney Watson told me many years ago, that some of the ladvies in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey at the Coronation had signs, 'Peers only'.

It is difficult for reviewers to be generous to this book, since it has earned so much money. Hundreds of thousands of pounds. In my case the literary earnings have been so paltry and shameful recently that I have been tempted to lie to the Income Tax people, and tell them my income from writing has been higher than it is. Other reviewers have reviewed the life as well as the book, and have concluded that he should have listened to the 'stern daughter of the voice of God' – Duty, as Wordsworth puts it.

BERNARD RICHARDS

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